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SERVICE

USDA'S REPORT TO CONSUMERS

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FOOD

Commission to Study Food Retailing. The National Food Marketing Commission will hold its first public hearing on farm-retail price spreads May 5-8 in Washington, D. C. Since the end of World War II, retail food prices have increased about 15 percent while farmer's prices have dropped 15 percent. Putting it another way, farmers got 53 cents of the consumer's food dollar in 1945; today, only 37 cents.

Among the subjects to be aired at the hearings are: Costs of distribution, including wages and productivity; efficiency of operations; advertising and promotion costs, including trading stamps. The final Commission report will probably not be available until 1966. For general background information, write directly to the National Food Marketing Commission, 7th and D Streets, S.W., Washington, D. C. 20407.

Cost of a Week's Food Varies Greatly. Homemakers who wonder about the week's food spending, take heart, there's sure to be a family which spends more -- or less -- for food than yours. USDA recently estimated what it cost to feed a family of four, for various age adults and children. A family of four, with school age children for example spends an estimated \$19.20 on an economy food plan; with a low cost plan, \$24.80; with a moderate cost plan, \$33.20; and with a liberal plan, \$38.60. Cheapest family member to feed is the child under one, (from \$2.50 a week to \$4.20); most expensive is the boy age 15 to 20, (from \$6.70 a week to \$12.70). The estimates would vary, of course, depending on where the family lives, and other factors.

SMART SHOPPER

Pick the Plentifuls. Foods on the U. S. Department of Agriculture plentiful food list for May are: Eggs, honey, and prunes.

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CURRENT SERIAL RECORDS



More Quality Beef, Less Excess Fat. USDA is revising its beef grading standards to reflect consumer preferences for high quality beef with a minimum of excess fat. For the consumer, this will mean greater uniformity of eating quality -- within the USDA Prime, Choice, Good, and Standard grades. Research indicates past grade standards required more marbling (flecks of fat within the lean) than necessary, in some instances. The revised standards reduce marbling requirements accordingly. In a parallel action -- to encourage production of high quality beef with less excess fat -- the Department is instituting separate, optional standards which can be used to predict the amount of closely trimmed retail cuts a beef carcass will produce. Widespread use of the grades in industry can significantly reduce marketing costs as production, shipping, and trimming of fat is reduced. The revised quality standards and separate cutability standards become effective June 1.

Food Stamps -- 21 More Areas Open In April. Expansion of the U. S. Department of Agriculture's Food Stamp Plan took a big jump in April, with 21 more areas added in 11 States. (See Nov. 1964 SERVICE.) Under the program, low-income families -- certified in need of food aid by State or local welfare agencies -- exchange the money they would normally spend for food for food coupons worth more. The Federal coupons are then spent just like cash at retail food stores authorized by the Department of Agriculture. The program increases food-buying power of the low-income family by about two-thirds. On the average, for each \$6 provided by the family, USDA provides \$4 more. By mid-summer, about a million low-income people will be getting more food through the Food Stamp Program. Additional counties will be added in May. If yours is one of the new counties or one anticipating the program, an informative slide series, "A Share For All," is available on loan to groups. A picture story about the Food Stamp Program, for reproduction, is also available without charge. Write Editor, SERVICE.

Older People -- One Out of Two Needs Better Diet. Overweight, inadequate diets and inappropriate use of extra vitamins are some of the major diet problems of older people, according to a recent USDA survey conducted in Rochester, New York. A preliminary report was made in SERVICE, Jan. 1964. Now, the final report shows that slightly less than half of the households interviewed had diets providing enough nutrients and calories to insure good health. About a fourth had diets that could be called poor, because they furnished less than two-thirds of the recommended amount of at least one nutrient. Calcium and Vitamin C were most often short. About a third of those interviewed were overweight -- more women than men -- and they evidently just ate too much. This points up that senior citizens need fewer calories, even though requirements for other nutrients remain the same. The survey also gives information on food and age, health, and food spending. For details, write for Food Consumption and Diet Levels of Older Households in Rochester, N. Y., HER Report No. 25. Available from Superintendent of Documents, U. S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D. C. 20402; 50 cents. A "Better Eating for Older Folks" program might be encouraged for senior citizens groups, using this information as a guide.

RECREATION

The Trend Is Back-To-The-Farm For Fun. Best hope of meeting the growing U. S. demand for recreation facilities lies in the millions of acres no longer needed for farm production because of the efficiency of America's farmers. And in 1965, the U. S. Department of Agriculture expects an increasing number of farmers to develop some recreation facilities for public use on their farms. When you plan your vacation this year, give a thought to "back to the farm." Farm animals, hayrides, and chores have a natural appeal to children. Sometimes farmers will lease land to clubs and organizations for private recreation areas for members. Check with your State Department of Agriculture or Tourism, or with local county agricultural agents. Fun on the farm can be really reasonable recreation.

Community Beautification, Recreation. Is your club, union, civic association or community considering a campground or recreation area, perhaps as part of the beautification program? Well, USDA's Forest Service has drawings of tables, fireplaces, sanitary facilities, parking spurs, pulloff and multiple parking areas, traffic barriers, water traps, picnic shelters, and a marina to help you plan, build, and maintain a campground or picnic area. For a copy, ask for Working Drawings of Basic Facilities for Campground Development, AIB 264; write to Editor, SERVICE, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. 20250.

New Recreation-Conservation Sticker a Bargain. Authorized by Congress to help finance expanded recreation for the American public, a new recreation-conservation sticker, which costs \$7, will admit visitors to more National Forest recreation areas (at which an entrance fee is normally charged) than they could visit in a year. The sticker will admit the driver of a private car and all his passengers to most Federal recreation areas for the year beginning April 1. A small extra fee may be charged for such services as boat-launching or extra-large campsites. You can buy a sticker at any National Forest or National Park, or any field office of the Department of Agriculture's Forest Service, or Department of the Interior.

PEST CONTROL

Pesticides Seized as Mislabeled or Ineffective. Four pesticides -- a disinfectant, a garden insect dust, a bird repellent, and a fly bait -- were seized recently by U. S. Marshals, after the Department of Agriculture charged that the products violated the USDA-administered Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act. The Act protects the public from loss and possible personal injury through faulty, misbranded, or adulterated products. The disinfectant (Dirtex), was seized because it did not show the ingredients on the label and would not "fight germs" as claimed on the label; the garden dust (Apco '75') because all the ingredients were not listed on the label and because the label did not bear adequate instructions for use; the bird repellent (Stephenson's Superior Bird Repellent for Pigeons, Starlings, and Sparrows), was not registered at all, and the label did not give ingredients, directions for use, name of manufacturer or net weight, as required; the fly bait (Cossman Flycake) contained less than the stated amount of active ingredient, making it ineffective for control of flies.

CLOTHING

Teens Tell Fiber Favorites. It may be hard for some mothers to believe, but 2 out of 3 high school age boys confess great interest in choosing their own clothes. Girls are even more clothes conscious. Nearly 9 out of 10 of the 14-17 year olds interviewed in a nationwide U. S. Department of Agriculture survey showed intense interest in choosing their clothes. And most teenages have definite fiber favorites, too. For summer: cotton is tops for blouses, skirts, dresses, shirts, slacks, and sport coats. Cotton-polyester is second choice for girls. Slips? Girls prefer nylon, then cotton. Winter skirts? Wool, then wool-polyester or wool-acrylic. Cotton is top choice for winter blouses, sport shirts, everyday trousers and dresses. Winter dress slacks? The boys divide their choice between wool and cotton.

Ways to Reduce Wrinkles. If your automatic dryer doesn't have a "wash-and-wear" cycle, use it at "medium" or "low" setting for manmade fibers. After the articles are dry, tumble them for 10 minutes without heat. Then remove immediately and hang them up. This last step, U. S. Department of Agriculture laundry specialists say, is important because wash-and-wear items left in a dryer may acquire new wrinkles.

PROGRAM AIDS

Know Your "Extension" Agent. The "county agent" and "home agent" are your local representatives of the U. S. Department of Agriculture and State "land-grant" college or university, when it comes to education. We Show the Way, a 15-minute color film, tells the story of the Federal-State Cooperative Extension Service, which brings to America's families, on the farm and in the city, research findings and know-how of your State land-grant college and USDA. Available from the film library at your State land-grant college or university, or inquire Motion Picture Service, Office of Information, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. 20250. Allow about three weeks for delivery.

Good Meals For Busy Days is the title of a 57-frame color filmstrip, especially timely with spring cleaning and gardening chores to do. It shows visually how to prepare three simple meals with a minimum of time and labor. Basic points are brought out -- planning meals ahead, use of convenience foods, family cooperation, use of equipment, and use of tested recipes. For sale only. Order directly from: Photo Lab, Inc., 3825 Georgia Avenue, N.W., Washington, D. C., 20011. Filmstrip \$6.00. Mounted slide set \$8.85.

SERVICE is a monthly newsletter of consumer interest. It is designed for those who report to the individual consumer rather than for mass distribution. For information about items in this issue, write, SERVICE, Office of Information, U. S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D. C. 20250.